

Unsere Pflanzen. By F. Söhns. Dritte Auflage. Pp. iv+178. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1904.) Price 2-60 marks.

Children's Wild Flowers. By Mrs. J. M. Maxwell. Pp. viii+171. (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1904.) Price 7s. 6d. net.

THE derivation of many botanical names being very uncertain, it is probable that the subject appeals more to the philologist than the botanist. Who shall say, for instance, whether the speedwell takes its name from a saint Veronica, or should be derived from "vera icon" or "vera unica"? Vernacular names are perhaps more easily explained, but vary greatly in different districts. Similar difficulties occur with German popular names, so that Mr. Söhns has a number of problems of an indeterminate nature to solve in his book, which deals with the nomenclature of plants and their place in mythology and folklore. Generally the author's arguments are carefully deduced and convincing, and, as might be expected, the correct derivation is not always obvious. Tausendgueldenkraut, the popular name of *Erythraea centaurea*, suggests a connection with "centum aurum," but the specific name is undoubtedly given in honour of the Centaur Chiron, who was skilled in medicine, and the German name, which was at first hundert guelden Kraut, has apparently given place to Tausendgueldenkraut, where thousand is used in a hyperbolic sense, and thus the Centaur's plant has become associated with a fanciful expression. In addition to etymology, the book contains many references to popular superstitions. On account of the dissimilarity between German and English popular names it cannot be expected that the book will appeal strongly to English readers, but a third edition points to its success in Germany.

The book by Mrs. Maxwell is intended to interest children in wild flowers by narrating the legends and stories connected with them. Scientific description is practically limited to habitat and comparative characters for distinguishing between the species of a genus, and coloured illustrations are provided as a means of identification of the plants. Obviously the purpose of the writer is not to train the powers of observation or inculcate accuracy, but rather to stimulate the faculties of imagination.

Superstitions about Animals. By Frank Gibson. Pp. 208. (London and Newcastle-on-Tyne: Walter Scott Publishing Co., 1904.) Price 3s. 6d.

THIS is an unpretentious little book which will interest many people. It brings together some of the most common superstitions about animals, "dealing with them in a light and popular way," with copious quotations from the poets. One of its aims is to sweep away those superstitions that are foolish and degrading, to clear the air for a free appreciation of the real wonders of nature. For "there is no subject under heaven which will give more pleasure or lasting and real profit than that of Natural History." Mr. Gibson deals first with omens, such as the ticking of the death-watch and the baying of a dog; he goes on to distortions of facts of natural history, such as "salamanders in the fire," "crocodile's tears," "the hibernation of swallows"; he ends up with creatures of the imagination, like the "basilisk," the "phoenix," and the "griffin." The author is a devout admirer of the real things of nature with an unusual knowledge of the poets both great and small. He has not seriously tackled the difficult side of his subject—the attempt to account historically and psychologically for the origin and persistence of the more important superstitions. He has forgotten the salt.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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A Great Oxford Discovery.

IN a recent study of some eighteenth century naturalists' writings I was a good deal struck by the amount of attention devoted to the problem of whether the white man was a sport from negroid stock or the negro a sport from a white race. The matter was discussed from every standpoint, physiological, geographical, and theological, but the consensus of opinion, based chiefly on the existence of albinotic and pied negroes, and on the misunderstood effects of leucoderma, was that the white might be a negro sport, but that there was no evidence of a black sport in the case of the white races. If such an opinion were correct, and the white man only a negro sport, we should certainly expect to find the negroid cranial type common among the white races. Two distinguished Oxford men of science have just thrown remarkable light on this problem. They have given a very simple series of conditions by which crania can be classed into skulls of negroid, non-negroid, and intermediate types. These conditions depend entirely on a classification of nasal and facial indices, and by their processes our authors are able to distinguish between the negroid, non-negroid, and intermediate types among prehistoric Egyptian crania. Not being an anatomist, I am quite unable to judge of the processes by which they have reached their criteria, and the photographs which accompany their volume are of so obscure a character—indeed, in the present state of cranial photography somewhat unworthy of a university press—that they hardly allow the uninitiated even with a lens to appreciate the justification which the authors find for their classification in the outward appearances of their cranial groups. I think, however, we may safely give the greatest weight possible to a judgment formed by the Oxford professor of human anatomy and the Oxford reader in Egyptology in a folio volume just issued by the syndics of the University Press.

Taking their classification as beyond discussion, I have applied it:—

First, to a fairly long series of admittedly negro crania, all males. I find 7.3 per cent. are non-negroid, 39.0 per cent. are truly negroid, and 53.7 per cent. are intermediate. It is clear that we only need to let the negroes change their skins, and a sensible percentage will be non-negroid.

Secondly, to a fairly long series of English skulls, male and female. I find of Englishmen 20 per cent. are negroid, 46 per cent. non-negroid, and 34 per cent. are intermediate in type. Among Englishwomen 11 per cent. are negroid, 48 per cent. non-negroid, and 41 per cent. are of intermediate type. Thus of the whole English population slightly more than 50 per cent. are either pure negroid or partially negroid; while in an outwardly pure negroid group, upwards of 60 per cent. are non-negroid or mixed with non-negroid elements.

I have not yet had time to apply Prof. Thomson and Mr. Randall-Maciver's test to Asiatic races, but I have not the least doubt that I shall find there also pure negroid and intermediate negroid elements. But that the Englishman should have as large a negroid element in his constitution as the prehistoric Egyptian, and only half as little pure negroid element as admitted negroes, is to my mind an epoch-making discovery, which will at once attract attention to Oxford as a centre for a novel school of craniometry and anthropology.

KARL PEARSON.

University College, London.

Inversions of Temperature and Humidity in Anti-cyclones.

IN NATURE of February 16 Mr. W. H. Dines cited an example of a large temperature inversion, observed with kites during the prevalence of very high barometric pressure in England, and remarked on the possible connection between the two phenomena.

Observations with kites at Blue Hill during the past ten years, and with balloons elsewhere, show that inversions of temperature occur at some height in the free air under almost all weather conditions. In a discussion of the kite observations at Blue Hill, published in 1897 in part i., vol. xlii., *Annals of the Astronomical Observatory of Harvard College*, Mr. H. H. Clayton probably first pointed out that marked inversions of temperature at heights of from a quarter to half a mile in the free air occur in the rear of anti-cyclones. He gives one example of a rise of 26° F. between 2180 feet and 2530 feet, accompanied by a corresponding fall of 50 per cent. in the relative humidity, this rise of temperature being more than twice that mentioned by Mr. Dines.

Prof. Hergesell's soundings with kites on board the Prince of Monaco's yacht last July, in the permanent high barometric pressure south of the Azores, showed a decrease of temperature of 6° F. up to about 1800 feet, when the temperature suddenly rose 14° F., and so remained throughout a stratum 3000 feet thick, above which it fell at the adiabatic rate, the relative humidity decreasing 50 per cent. with the rise in temperature. It would appear, therefore, that such inversions of temperature and relative humidity at a moderate height are characteristic of areas of high barometric pressure, both over the land and water.

A. LAWRENCE ROTCH.

Blue Hill Meteorological Observatory, Hyde Park,
Mass, U.S.A., March 13.

The Planet Fortuna.

ONE point of interest to Airy's brother men of science has not been noticed—that he either misunderstood or wilfully misapplied the lines of Juvenal. The "Purists" urged that planets had always been named after deities, and that Fortuna was not a deity. Airy said that she was, and quoted "nos te, nos facimus, Fortuna, deam." What did Juvenal really say? He said, "the wise see no divinity in Fortune; it is only human folly that calls her goddess, and assumes for her a place in heaven." As Gifford renders it:—

"We should see
If wise, O Fortune, nought divine in thee;
But we have deified a name alone,
And fixed in heaven thy visionary throne."

"Nullum numen abest" belongs to a numerous class of misquotations, and spoils the whole tenor of the passage. The supreme authority on Juvenal, J. E. B. Mayor, does not even condescend to cite it. W. T.

CITY DEVELOPMENT.¹

THE elegant volume under notice was written by Prof. Patrick Geddes in response to an invitation by the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust. The report is copiously illustrated, and embodies a very great amount of valuable and important information, plans, and suggestions as to the laying out of the public park, and as to the buildings, in or around it, needed or desirable for carrying on the work of the trust.

The author set to work by having a complete photographic survey made of the park and its environments. All those photographs, however, could not be incorporated in the report, but they will be preserved as a permanent record of the appearance of the park and its surroundings before any changes were inaugurated by the trust. Not content with mere photographs and maps, the author strongly recommends the construction of a relief model of the park, bearing on its surface pasteboard models of the new buildings proposed, in order that the general effect of these buildings on their surroundings may be clearly anticipated, and thus the erection of structures out of harmony with their surroundings may be avoided.

¹ "City Development, a Study of Parks, Gardens, and Culture Institutions." A Report to the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust. By P. Geddes. Pp. 232. (Westminster: Geddes and Co., 5, Old Queen Street.) Price 21s. net.

At the beginning of the report a general plan of the park is given, showing the proposed improvements. At first sight the plan appears very elaborate and overcrowded with detail, but this is due



FIG. 1.—View down House Dene, showing back of old Mansion-house to left (south), and on opposite bank, a little nearer than the large tree, Wallace's Well, fallen in. Old paths effaced. From "City Development."

to the fact that its designer has endeavoured to show all the essential details in the plan, in order to reduce the number of blocks in the text, and a little study is all that is required to show that the proposed improvements are not of such a radical nature as a first impression might convey. The proposed treatment is essentially a conservative one, and the suggested changes and improvements have been designed to interfere as little as possible with the existing features, views, and even details of the park and glen.

About one-half of the report is devoted to a detailed consideration of the park, its environs, gardens, and nature museums. The possible approaches and entrances are carefully considered and selected. These must render easy access to, and be in keeping with, the important centre to which they lead. The park must not end abruptly where the town begins, but its environs or setting should be such that a harmonious blending—one with the other—is secured, and in this connection the author seems to have made the most of the material at his disposal.



FIG. 2.—The same view, with Wallace's Well simply re-built, and roughly rustic foot-bridge, uniting old paths now renewed. The Mansion-house shows also one of the proposed new turrets. From "City Development."

As regards the laying out of the park, the proposed lakes, gardens, tennis courts, cricket pitches, bowling greens, and other recreation grounds, its pavilions, band-stands, museums, walks, and groves,